UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/998
26 October 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

# LETTER DATED 26 OCTOBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward to you the enclosed statement reproduced from the 24 October edition of Eritrea Profile, an official paper of the Government of Eritrea, regarding Ethiopia's issuance of contradictory maps, raising fundamental questions. This statement responds to the letter addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations and its annex dated 19 October 1998 (S/1998/977).

I would like to draw your attention and the attention of the members of the Security Council to the fact that the unilateral issuance of a new map of the administrative region of Tigray by the Ethiopian Central Mapping Authority in October 1997, which indicated as part of Ethiopia large swaths of Eritrean territory, was a clear measure of aggression, which, along with the use of force to control these usurped chunks of Eritrean territory by the Government of Ethiopia, triggered the eruption of the conflict. Ethiopia's official and clear withdrawal of the Tigray map of 1997 and its clear announcement that it respected the borders between the two countries delineated by clear treaties during the colonial period thus forms a fundamental element of the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The importance attached to this issue needs to be understood within this light.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate this letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Ethiopia's Cartographic Amnesia

Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has denied issuing a "new map recently", stating that "the copy under reference was merely made available to the diplomatic community last May" after the eruption of the conflict. The Foreign Ministry further asserted, in a statement issued on 19 October, that the "copy was based on maps used in Ethiopia for decades".

But this evasive approach raises more questions rather than answering the existing discrepancies in Ethiopia's territorial claims. Let us not squabble about timing, for the moment, as this is of marginal importance. The issue remains that Ethiopia has published two separate and distinct maps.

Last year, on 19 October, the Government of Ethiopia openly published a new map of Tigray (map I), which appeared in the weekly edition of Woyin, the official newspaper of the TPLF, Ethiopia's ruling party (full article attached). This map, which includes large chunks of Eritrea's territory as part of Ethiopia, was described in the paper as "the product of four-year's work in conjunction with the Central Mapping Authority in Addis Ababa". The paper further contended that "the new map defines the boundaries of Tigray with neighbouring States as well as contiguous administrative regions within Ethiopia". Ethiopia's occupation of Adi Murug in July 1997 and continuous encroachment on the Badme area coincided with the release of this new map. This was a clear violation of Eritrean sovereignty, both in intent and practice.

Now, without rescinding this map, Ethiopia has "made available" a separate map (map II), which apparently conforms to Eritrea's recognized colonial boundaries. But even here, Badme village has been deliberately relocated so that its coordinates fall inside Ethiopia's uncontested territory. Furthermore, the town of Sheraro lies, in this map, outside the territory that Ethiopia claimed "is occupied by Eritrea". It may be recalled that Ethiopia's Parliament passed the resolution to declare war on the pretext that Badme and Sheraro were invaded and occupied by Eritrea.

Under these circumstances, the Government of Ethiopia must be made to answer the following fundamental questions with some degree of coherence and consistency:

(a) Does Ethiopia respect Eritrea's colonial boundaries? If the answer is yes, why doesn't Addis Ababa officially acknowledge that the October 1997 map is illegal?

(b) Is Ethiopia prepared to allow independent cartographers to ascertain the true location of Badme village?

(c) How about Sheraro? Ethiopia's Parliament asserted that the town was invaded and occupied by Eritrea on 12 May, while the map distributed by the Foreign Ministry to "illustrate the areas occupied by Eritrea" put the town outside the shaded "occupied areas".

Map I (a)

# Our new regional map ready

A new administrative map has been prepared for Tigrai region in line with the zonal and sub-zonal federal structure. The head of the Physical Planning Department in the Office of Planning and Economic Development, Mr. Teklemedhin Dirar, told Weyin that the new map is the product of four-years work in conjunction with the Central Mapping Authority in Addis Ababa. He explained that the map will serve as a vital tool to identify the natural resources of the region, help conduct research and implement development programs.

Mr. Teklemedhin elaborated that the new map defines the boundaries of Tigrai with neighbouring states as well as contiguous administrative regions within Ethiopia. Apart from this, an Atlas map for the region is under preparation and that 70 percent of the project has already been finalized, he pointed out. Mr. Teklemedhin said that the Atlas map will be ready by the end of the year.

According to the department head, the region's new administrative map prepared on 1: 250,000 cm. scale has already been approved by the Tigrai Regional Administration. It has also been sent to the Central Mapping Authority in Addis Ababa for printing. Shortage of manpower and support services caused delay, he further explained. However, agencies like the Sarti Commission have contributed in the implementation of the project through the provision of the necessary materials. Under the new map, Tigrai Region will have 4 zones and 35 sub-zones.

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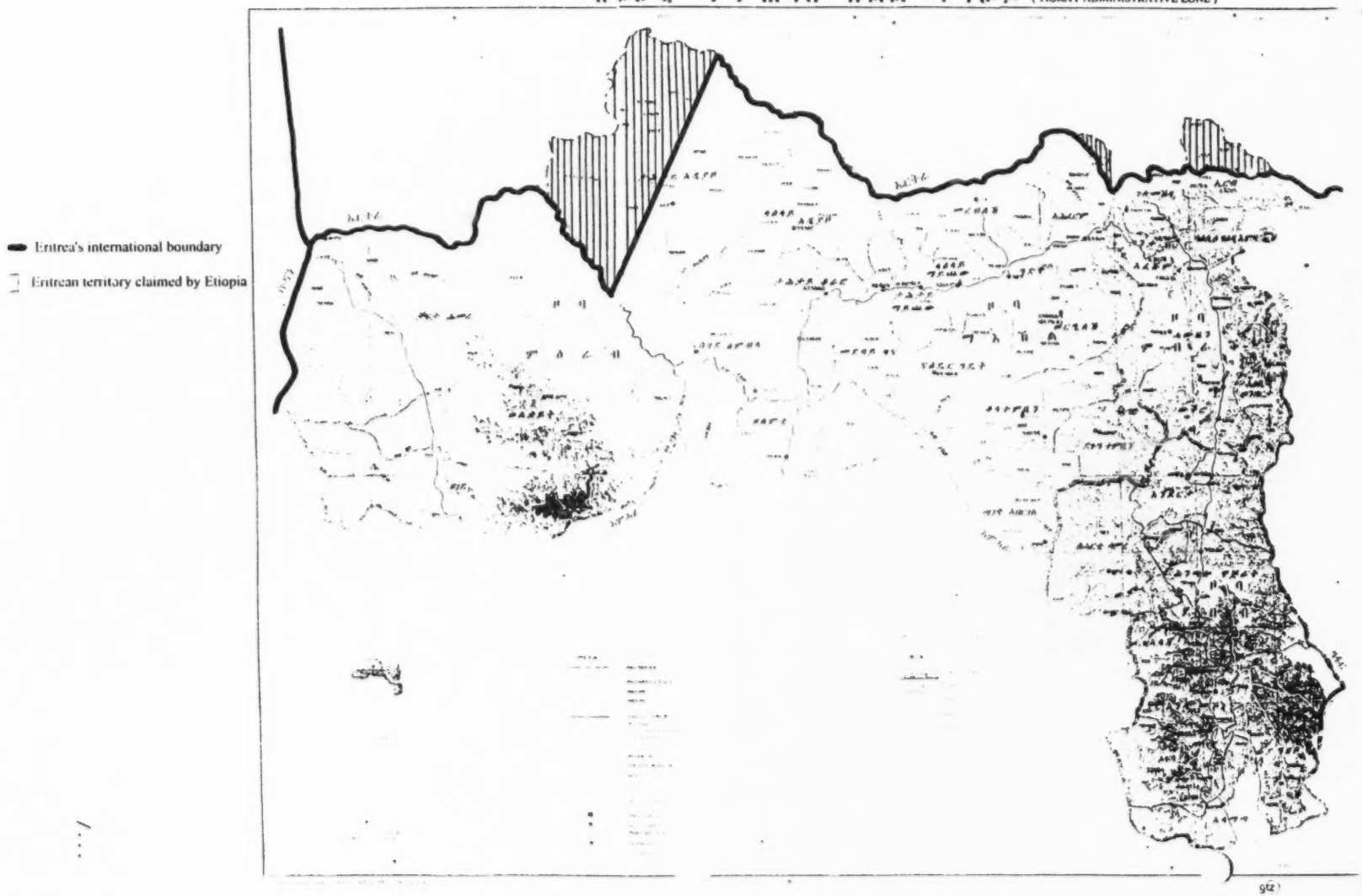
Map I (b)

ብሄራዊ ምምሕዳር ክልል ትግራይ (TIGRAY ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE)

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Map II

UDAN
ERITREA
RED SEA
Keren
Akordat
Mitsiwa
ASMERA
Barentu
Mereb
Gash
Dekemehare
Adi Keyih
Mendefera
Adi Aw-ala
Mereb
Tekeze
Sheraro
Adi Da-iro
Rama
Adigrat
Humera
Axum
Adwa
Inda Silase
Tekeze
ETHIOPIA
Wikro
Abiy Adi
MEKELE
Debark
Dabat
Maychew